

10-1-2013

The Long Hello: A Week of Events Orients New Students to Law School Life

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Recommended Citation

UB Law Forum (2013) "The Long Hello: A Week of Events Orients New Students to Law School Life," *UB Law Forum*: Vol. 28 : No. 1 , Article 11.

Available at: https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/ub_law_forum/vol28/iss1/11

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THE LONG HELLO

A week of events orients new students to law school life

Three years from now, they will march across the stage at UB's Center for the Arts as new graduates of SUNY Buffalo Law School. So it was only fitting that the members of the Class of 2016 would begin their journey in that same venue, kicking off a weeklong calendar of orientation events.

Blue-shirted "student ambassadors" greeted the incoming students as they arrived on Aug. 23. What followed was a whirlwind of information, support and fun – along with some serious reminders that lawyers have a special obligation to high ethical standards and access to justice.

"We wanted to make this a signature event to designate a transition in their life," says Lillie Wiley-Upshaw, vice dean for admissions and student life, who led the committee that organized orientation week. "They'll become different people, and we wanted to recognize this from the first day of orientation."

Along with greetings from Dean Makau W. Mutua and other faculty and administrators, the 1Ls heard a brief history of the Law School and watched a video from the school's recent 125th anniversary celebrations. They also took an oath – a tradition at



many other law schools, but a first at SUNY Buffalo – in which they promised, among other things, to "be fair, honest, courteous and respectful to all people and commit [themselves] to service with integrity and without prejudice."

An exercise on the next day of orientation reinforced that commitment to service. Created with the help of the United Way of Buffalo and Erie County, the Community Action Poverty Simulation had students role-play different situations faced by people living close to the poverty line. The goal was to drive home the reality that poor people face a frustrating maze of challenges in the everyday struggle to survive, and that lawyers can change those lives for the better.

Students were assigned to a "family" and given a description of their circumstances. For example, one might play the role of a 45-year-old male head of household with three children and a disabled wife, unemployed and needing job training. His fellow students would fill the other roles in the family. A set of props – play money, pretend Social Security cards and the like – added verisimilitude. The challenge was to deal with different government agencies (run by staff members and current students) to accomplish tasks like applying for public assistance.



The Class of 2016, by the numbers

Some fast facts about the new 1L class:

25	Average age
20	Youngest
56	Oldest
26	Percent who are 25 and older
50	Percent who are women
50	Percent who are men
21	Percent who are racial or ethnic minorities
8	Percent with advanced degrees
3.48	Median GPA
154	Median LSAT score
199	Enrolled first-years
1,146	Number of applications



Lillie Wiley-Upshaw
Vice dean for
admissions and
student life

As the orientation students learned, it's not an easy life. They found themselves filling out applications, stuck in waiting rooms, short of money for gasoline or bus fare. In some cases, robbers stole their Social Security card and they had to start over. Play-acted unsavory characters added to the sense of realism.

"We tried to simulate, as much as possible, the same sorts of circumstances that people who live on the line would experience," Wiley-Upshaw says.

After the role play was over, she says, staff members debriefed the experience with the students. It wasn't news to all of them: "Some said, 'That's not too far off from my life. It's what I've had to live with and deal with,'" Wiley-Upshaw says.

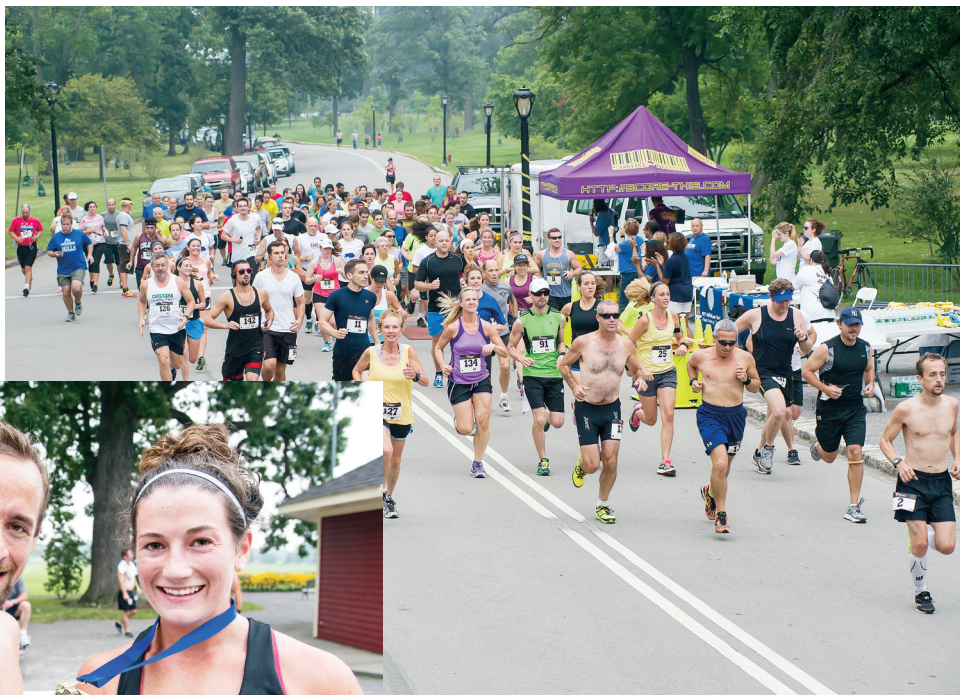
For all the students, though, the take-away message was one of professional responsibility. "Lawyers are really advocates, and they're essential in our society because they are there to help people in need," Wiley-Upshaw says. "This was a good way for them to start conceptualizing themselves in the role of lawyers in our society. No matter how you use your law degree, understanding and listening to people's stories is an important part of

their skill set."

The simulation was followed by a tour of Carolyn's House, in Niagara Falls, a supportive housing program for homeless women and children that also offers education, counseling, advocacy and support services to its clients. The facility was created with significant help from the Law School's

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*First annual 3.5-mile
run/walk in Delaware
Park to benefit
the Law School's
clinical program*



Race winners: Charlie Anderson of Grand Island and law student Aimee Hopkins '16.

*Two LL.M.
students arrive
with prestigious
fellowships*

Two new students come to O'Brien Hall this fall with a particularly impressive credential: They are Fulbright scholars, midcareer legal professionals who will pursue master of laws degrees at SUNY Buffalo Law with the support of this prestigious international fellowship.

The Fulbright Foreign Student Program, funded by Congress through the State Department, supports student grants for non-U.S. nationals to study in master's and Ph.D. programs in the United States. According to Joseph E. Schneider '02, the Law School's director of post-professional and international education, 72 Fulbright scholars are at UB for the 2013-14 academic year.

"Having students of this caliber really elevates the level of classroom discussion," Schneider says. "It sets the bar pretty high."

The two are among 10 total master of laws students admitted this year,

plus an exchange student from Barcelona, Spain. The Fulbright scholars are:

Ali Mosfer of Frankfurt, Germany. Mosfer is a doctoral candidate, studying criminal and constitutional law issues, at Goethe University in Frankfurt. His particular interest is in criminal law related to economic offenses, and he is enrolled in the Criminal Law LL.M. program.

Shiyamaladevi Manokaran of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Manokaran graduated second in her class from the University of Malaya, the nation's oldest public university, and has practiced litigation with the Kuala Lumpur firm Shook Lin & Bok. An avid sports fan, she is fluent in three languages: English, Malay and Tamil. She is enrolled in the General LL.M. program.



Poverty simulation had students role-play different situations faced by people living close to the poverty line



Fulbright Scholars Ali Mosfer of Frankfurt, Germany, left, and Shiyamaladevi Manokaran of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

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Affordable Housing Clinic.

Also part of orientation week for the Class of 2016: small-group and panel discussions with faculty and alumni on what to expect in Law School; visits to downtown courts; a Student Bar Association barbecue and a chartered bus to the Elmwood Festival of the Arts; an alumni reception featuring a “Buffalo Thanksgiving Feast”; and a 3.5-mile run/walk in Delaware Park that raised \$500 to benefit the Law School’s clinical program. Over 100 people completed the two laps of the park’s scenic Ring Road.